

Sunday May 3, 2020 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church

**Bible Study – 1 Peter 2:19-25
By His Wounds: Revive Us Again**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants share a time of suffering or painful endurance.

Group Dialogue (Approximately 30 minutes)

1 Peter 2:19-25. Context. Again this week, there is a certain correspondence between this week's reading from 1 Peter and the reading from the Acts: in Acts we read of the new lifestyle taken up by the converts; in 1 Peter, the author, after giving a general exhortation regarding the meaning of salvation, moves to a description of how his hearers should live, now that they have been called to a faith that is often at odds with the society from which they have come. This week's reading is taken from what is called a "household code," a code of conduct that spells out proper behavior for different members of the household. In ancient times, the household included slaves. Here, the author is addressing the slaves, no doubt a sizeable segment of any of the early Christian congregations. Roman economy and society were built around slave labor. Slavery was not a matter of race, but of other factors: many were prisoners of war, or other foreigners brought by force. In hard times, parents on the brink of starvation might sell their children into slavery in order to survive – a practice that continues today. By definition slaves were property and could be abused with impunity in every way by their masters. Slaves frequently escaped when the opportunity arose, and there was a thriving trade in returning runaways. Some slaves were allowed to buy their freedom. For others, the best hope they had was that their masters, when they died, would bequeath them their freedom. Here the author encourages slaves not to return abuse with abuse, but to follow the example of Jesus, whose behavior was modeled on Isaiah's description of the Suffering Servant.

Read 1 Peter 2:19-25

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn't make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read 1 Peter 2:19-25 again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- Take turns sharing your testimony. When did you first become aware of God? How did you experience God's love and acceptance? How did your life change as a result?
- What might it mean to be "called" as Peter affirms in 1 Peter 2:21?

- What is the difference between Peter's affirmation of endurance (v. 20), trust (v. 23), and unacceptable receiving of abuse? A possible answer: It is an endurance of faith, a trust that God is present with us in our suffering. This is in contrast with continuing in a relationship that promotes harm and exploitation.
- How have we all strayed like sheep (v. 25)? How exactly have we returned to the guardian of our souls (v. 25)?
- Read Isaiah 53:4-9. How would this passage from Peter have been received as Good News to slaves (v.18)? Hint: Christ can relate to their suffering; they do not suffer alone; there is a greater freedom that can be experienced in any situation, no matter how unjust their present circumstances and that awaits them in fullness beyond death, etc.
- How do Peter's affirmations in this letter undermine unjust systems like slavery and human trafficking?

Prayer (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer

Sending Forth (2 minutes). Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

God of steadfast love, you call us to be loving as you are loving. Help us to see ways that we might sacrifice and give so that others might experience the abundance of joy and fullness of life that comes only from you. Empower us to work for the freedom and release of those who are captive to addiction, fear, consumerism, exploitation, abuse, and neglect, so that they might experience your freedom and love. Amen. And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.